



State of Arizona  
Department of Education  
Office of John Huppenthal  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

November 3, 2014

Dear Superintendents, Charter Representatives, Test Coordinators, and other education stakeholders,

This morning the State Board of Education (Board) awarded the contract for the new statewide achievement test, Arizona's Measurement of Educational Readiness to Inform Teaching (AzMERIT), to American Institutes for Research (AIR) a not-for-profit organization with decades of experience in K-12 educational assessments. The procurement process for this new test was thorough, fair, and thoughtfully considered. I am confident that the Board has selected the best test for Arizona.

The AzMERIT will be administered in the content areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics to students in Grades 3 through 8 and to students enrolled in high school level English and Mathematics courses. The features of the new AzMERIT include:

- **Uniquely Arizona exams**

These exams will be aligned with the breadth and depth of the Arizona English Language Arts and Mathematics standards. Arizona will control the decision making for all aspects of the exams including test design, test and item content, scoring, and reporting. Arizona educators will have extensive involvement.

- **Better able to measure students' readiness for the future**

The exams will offer computer-based innovative item types that better measure students' mastery of the standards including problem solving and critical thinking skills. Equated paper-based exams will be available for schools not ready for computer-based testing. Student scores will be comparable regardless of the testing format.

- **More meaningful reporting**

Reports will identify students' areas of strength and weakness. AzMERIT results will be comparable to results in Utah, Florida, and the Smarter Balanced states.

- **Least Disruptive**

The AzMERIT testing window and times are similar to AIMS testing window and times. Students will participate in testing for about 7 hours across multiple days during an April testing window.

- **Simple technology requirements**

AIR's testing platform requires minimal bandwidth, is usable on a wide variety of devices, and is easy to install and use. There is no need for schools to have a dedicated IT coordinator to administer a computer-based testing using the AIR platform. This will allow Arizona schools to move quickly to



computer-based testing. AIR is experienced in transitioning state testing programs from paper-based testing to computer-based testing.

- **Commitment to student privacy**

AIR has demonstrated the ability and commitment to comply with all Arizona laws regarding student privacy, the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA).

The Board must still make decisions about how the results of the AzMERIT will be used for various accountability purposes including A-F School Letter Grades, Teacher and Principal Evaluations, Move on When Reading, and the potential use of End-of-Course results in high school course grades. At its December meeting, the Board is expected to discuss the establishment of a “safe harbor” year for accountability measures.

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) is currently in discussions with AIR and will share more details about the test including testing windows and timelines in the coming days and weeks. The ADE Assessment Section will email Test Coordinators with information as it becomes available, as well as offer regular webinars and in-person trainings in January.

**Attached are a letter to parents and another letter to teachers about AzMERIT which may be shared as is or used as a template to write your own letters.**

Thank you for your dedication to the education of Arizona’s students. ADE is here to support you as we implement AzMERIT.

Sincerely,

John Huppenthal  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Jennifer Johnson, Ed.D.  
Deputy Superintendent of Programs and Policy  
Arizona Department of Education

